

## Overview of Main Counselling Approaches

### **Psychoanalytic/Psychodynamic**

This approach was developed principally by Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939), a pioneer of the talking therapy. It has continued to be practised up to the present day.

A classical analysis will involve meeting for 2, 3 or even 5 times a week with an analyst, probably lying on a couch so the patient does not see the therapist. During this time the patient free associates (says anything which comes to mind) as far as possible without censorship.

Conflicts from the past will come into the mind and there will be a resistance to continuing. This resistance is interpreted by the analyst, who has an understanding of the unconscious.

As far as possible, any real relationship with and knowledge about the analyst is discouraged. A transference will occur, where the patient experiences the analyst as if they were an important figure from the patient's past, in particular as a parent.

The aim of analysis is 'to transform neurotic misery into ordinary unhappiness.' (Freud)

Psychodynamic counsellors work from the same principles but will meet less frequently (once or twice a week usually), they may sit facing each other and they may offer more empathy and understanding than a classical analyst.

### **Jungian**

Carl Jung (1875 – 1961) was an associate of Freud's – their ideas diverged and Jung developed his own theory and practice of therapy. Jung was more interested in spiritual ideas, whereas Freud concentrated on the biological drives, especially sex and aggression.

### **Transpersonal**

Modern Transpersonal approaches draw on both Freud's understanding of the primary drives and the Jungian respect for the reality of spiritual experience. The best known Transpersonal therapy is **Psychosynthesis**, developed by Assagioli (1888 – 1974). This is a highly creative and open approach, utilising guided fantasy, drawing and homework such as writing an autobiography. A motto during training is 'This is Not the Truth' which traditionally is written on the board before every class.

### **Behavioral**

Developed by BF Skinner (1904 – 1990), this is a scientific approach, not so interested in either primary drives or spiritual experience, but rather in moderating and changing problematic behaviours through conditioning.

This has further developed in **CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy)**, currently a very popular and well-resourced form of treatment, especially for depression and anxiety. CBT works to identify states of mind (eg feeling sad and dispirited) and look

systematically at the beliefs which inform them (eg 'I am worthless'). These unproductive and irrational beliefs are challenged in the therapy (eg Do you really believe you are completely worthless, with no redeeming features at all? All the time? Have you never done anything in your life you believe is worthwhile?) New behaviours are tried out by the patient, diaries of feelings, beliefs and behaviours are made and brought back to the therapy.

## **Humanistic**

The Humanistic therapies were developed in the 50s and 60s, principally in the US. The spirit of these therapies is optimistic, broadly, the idea is that people basically want to be good and happy, and given the right conditions of encouragement and warmth, will be so.

Freudian ideas were held to be unnecessarily gloomy and behavioral ideas to be coldly scientific, as if we were essentially no different from pigeons or rats.

**Carl Rogers' (1902 – 1987) Person-Centred Counselling** is possibly the best known Humanistic Therapy and forms the bedrock of many counselling training courses. It stresses the importance of listening to and attempting to understand and emotionally enter the client's world of experience and meaning in a non judgemental way and trusts that if this is genuinely offered by the counsellor and, to some extent, experienced by the client, then growth will 'invariably occur.'

**Fritz Perls' (1893 – 1970) Gestalt Therapy** is a creative, integrative Humanistic approach, drawing on methods from psychodrama in the 'empty chair' technique, where clients 'become' parts of themselves, imaginary entities, or people from their past. In the past, a high degree of emotional expression and catharsis was encouraged. Fritz Perls' methods were confrontational and abrasive; a slogan from the 60s was 'Lose your mind and come to your senses'. Modern Gestaltists, especially the **Relational School**, tend to be kinder, warmer and more respectful and to stress, like the Person Centred therapists, the importance of the counselling relationship itself as an agent of change.

**Eric Berne's (1910 – 1970) Transactional Analysis, or TA** is a well-known Humanistic method which draws on some behavioural ideas. It has a model of the Human Psyche known as the Parent, Adult and Child ego states and these are taught to the client, with the aim of the client being able to identify when they are in each state. Generally, being in Adult is not problematic, it means one is rational and in touch with oneself emotionally and responding autonomously. Being in Child can be problematic if one is responding to outdated messages and being in Parent can mean one is condescending, smothering or punitive.

Berne believed we all engage in 'games' which are predictable and unproductive exchanges. The aim of TA counselling would be to be 'game free', though this might never be fully achieved. A TA slogan is 'I'm okay and you're okay.'

*This is just a tiny taste of the main counselling approaches. Please go on the internet, get hold of books and read as much as you can to get a more informed sense of the field.*